

**Remarks of Lt. Governor Becky Skillman at the
Indiana Main Street Awards
November 13th, 2009**

I'm delighted to be here today to celebrate the success of Indiana Main Street communities, and to welcome our newest partners in progress into the Main Street program.

In state government, we are committed to revitalizing the economy all across Indiana – small towns and big cities alike. But, we know that you, the residents and leaders of those communities, are the best architects of your own economic recovery. And a key part of that recovery is a thriving downtown.

Great downtowns highlight the best of what our communities have to offer, and each one is as unique as the people who live there. Downtowns are the heart of every community, the hub for government, business, culture and financial and religious activity. People flock there to spend time and money doing things they can't find just anywhere. The shops and restaurants are unique to their communities, and that's what keeps us coming back.

When a downtown is vibrant, people and businesses want to be there. Whether it's retail or independent business, the bottom line is that a healthy downtown generates a healthy economy.

For nearly 30 years, the Indiana Main Street program has worked with local communities to restore and revitalize downtowns and central business districts. The program's strength lies in how it brings together local business leaders, government officials, and citizens and helps them be a force for positive change.

We are constantly working with communities statewide to help them realize their own visions for growth and opportunity. Every year, the five agencies under the office of the Lt. Governor distribute millions of dollars in grants to communities in support of their efforts. These funds directly contribute to housing needs, energy and agriculture needs, and community development such as libraries and wastewater treatment plants. Most are competitive grants, and all are in addition to dollars distributed by other agencies and any incentives for business expansion and job creation.

The Indiana Main Street program is another important tool we can use to help Hoosier communities move forward. Main Street programs have had a tremendous impact in Indiana. From 1985 to 2008, more than \$4 billion dollars have been invested in Indiana Main Street Communities. And more than half of that—\$2.6 billion—came from the private sector. Main Street investment has brought:

- more than 17,000 new jobs,
- more than 2,800 new businesses,
- more than 5,400 rehabilitation projects,
- more than 1,200 new construction and public improvement projects,
- and more than 5,100 new housing units.

That is the legacy you are all a part of.

I want to thank you for working together with Indiana Main Street to revitalize your downtowns. Whether you are a longstanding Main Street community or you're just getting started, you are contributing not just to your corner of Indiana, but to the entire state. We all have a part to play in Indiana's long-term economic recovery. And right now, we need good people like you who want to get your communities moving and make us stronger than ever.

I'm confident that we'll see the return of a booming economy because we have people like you working on it every day. Our growth, economic development and community development are ultimately in your hands. You are the ones who care about the future of our communities and the future of our state. You are a big reason Indiana will see a complete economic comeback.

Thanks for all you do.